The Selection and Deployment of Surpass by:

Saxion University, The Netherlands

Presentation Transcript & Profiles

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Introduction

The following is a transcript of a presentation by Leen Van Kaam of Saxion University at the 7th Annual Surpass User Group Conference in Amsterdam in 2014.

All the views expressed by the interviewees are their own.

Video Links

Presentation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94JAZ93zoGc

Transcript

Leen Van Kaan

I want to tell you something about the selection and deployment of Surpass Academic Editions at Saxion University. I am a System Administrator at Saxion, and my team is System Administration so that's my perspective.

I want to tell you something about Saxion, something about the selection process. Andy asked me to tell about… that's something I can't refuse Andy anything. It's in my talk but I've not got much time. But, I will tell you something about the deployment of Surpass Academic Editions and the implementation within Saxion, and the importance of institution-wide agreements and first results, and a bit about what we're going to do next year.

Saxion is a University of Applied Sciences in the eastern part of the Netherlands, near the German border. We have 12 individual schools in very different things: our economists, our technologists, our schools of health and social work; very different independent schools on four different locations in the eastern part. On the picture you only see a part of the campus in Enschede; that's where I live.

We started in 2006 or 2007 with digital examination, and our focus was completely summative digital examination, high-stakes exams. It went very well with those digital examinations. We had a big growth between 2007 and about 2010, and then we met our limitations. It wasn't going anymore, because the application we used was a nice application to start with, but it had nothing to go to a professional stage and to do other things with it, and to grow any further. So, in 2012, we decided to say goodbye to our test application and choose another one. And it felt like this, going away from something we love, and we liked, and did a good job for us, but it was not of this time anymore; we had a better tool.

So, we started with our selection process, and it was very important that all the schools were part of it and were embracing the new application. So we made a shortlist of three applications with all the schools and we developed 22 test scenarios. What the scenario is, I'll tell you a bit later. We made in those test scenarios a lot of items, questions, things that should be there in the application with priority 1-3 and with showstoppers. And I think the words, you all know what I mean with this. Key users and stakeholders gave input for every scenario, they described the scenario with us. They developed the scenarios by telling their processes and giving priorities. They were testing the

scenarios with us, so they weren't at … but I was, or my colleagues were at … to see everything in every of the three applications. They, at last, appreciated the scenarios when they were good and not good, and which scenario was the best in which application.

A scenario is a description of what's needed for a specific part in the summative process of Saxion. We looked at how we worked in that moment of 2012, and there are a lot of examples of scenarios. First, we had exams already with 180 students starting simultaneously with the same exam, but our application couldn't do more, and our schools needed 400 or 700. So, all 3 applications were asked to do a performance test, and show what happened with 700 students starting the same exam at the same moment. We had 12 different schools, almost independent, and they all were used to doing their own thing, so they had to have their own centre where they were able to do their own thing with their own roles and privileges. Privileges are very important, for instance a lecturer in Saxion never develops an exam, he only develops questions and he's making on paper an exam matrix, and that's his work. The other work is with specialists with teams that are specially made for this within schools or on a Saxion level, system-wide level.

We use test matrixes, and that's a very special meaning of test matrix, what we use. A test matrix is a test form with dynamic rules. We never offer a test matrix to a student, but a test matrix is meant for generating test forms we use as test versions from certain tests, and they have all fixed questions, always because of analysis reporting. So we needed a system where we could have a test matrix that generated several test forms in an easy way, where you could say 'there are my rules, please generate version 1, please generate version 2', etc. Our old application was very good in analysis, but the analysis was in Excel, it wasn't in the application itself. So in audits, all schools had to go to all kinds of systems where those analyses were, they couldn't show anything, and it was needed in the system itself. So we needed a lot of reports in our system about equality or what we were doing.

I can tell you a lot about the other test scenarios because they are all interesting, I think you know what a test scenario for us is.

Our reports of testing was tested all for 3 applications, and we always did it with traffic lights. Green means we can deploy the system with no hesitation, yellow means there are risks that we see perspective, and red means stop it; it doesn't work for this application in this scenario. And then we get something like this. These are five scenarios, those are the questions or issues we tested, these are the priorities, and those are the applications, and here is Surpass, the most green, so we chose Surpass. Everything was green, and it was also for the other 22 almost the same, there are some yellow things, but it's almost the same like this. All the schools agreed, because they made the choice and it was a very visible choice, and they all decided whether this was green or yellow or red.

We have Surpass now. We started in January 2013, and the first month was very important because we wanted to think about agreements of the use of the system. Our old system, every school did its own thing, but that was also the problem. Because they did all their own thing, there was nothing in common and you could not have one report in common because they used fuels different and things like that. We said we should force them to do the same things, when it's important for use of the system, about subjects or metadata or question titles or things like that. I will go further into that a bit later. But we thought about it very well, and we started with one school with agreements and tried out tested whether the agreements were well and then second and things like that, and then we forced it for everyone, like that.

We decided to deploy the system as is, we had a practice of testing, and we thought we shouldn't do any innovation now, we should only do some quality improvement. Quality improvement in question because everyone did something in the old system, there were pilots in it, there were nonsense in it, there was rubbish in it, and we didn't want to convert rubbish into rubbish. We wanted a structured system. We converted, between May 2013 and now, before our holidays, 45,000 digital questions and we added metadata, structured subjects, folders, names; we structured the whole thing. Saxion-wide we structured it, it's not every school does its thing, that's strict structure.

So we have now 300 subjects, the subjects are the taxonomy of the, not quite a taxonomy but a taxonomy data, and we have about 600 exams – real tests – and about 400 tests matrixes. We expect that over 11 centres are using it, and all the centres are trained, and they are the owner now so we delivered the ownership to them and they are fully responsible now.

I'll show something about the agreement about subjects and workflow. There are our subjects, this is our subject structure for one study. As you can see this is one study, this is our School of Health, and this is the study physiotherapy. Then, there are some subjects in it, and here you see the questions in one subject and those questions are all live already, and here are the draft and the review questions. We structured everything in subject groups for a study, and you see this in every school for us. We use the workflow, lecturers are developing questions, they have only the right to make draft questions or they have the right to review peers. But also exam bureaus – those are the specialists – they have rights to review. So, we are lacking – Ian, remember – we are lacking a second reviewer with another possibility after the review of the peers. If questions are reviewed by both, there is a gatekeeper who is getting those questions live and those gatekeepers are very special people. Here, Marscha Bisschop is the owner of the subject and she is the gatekeeper of Physiology. So, there is a special workflow. All the schools will use it but not all are using it yet, because we have 1,800 lecturers, so we cannot train that and there is a programme to do that next year.

Within a subject, we have an agreement about folder structure and about question titles. All the questions in a folder are always are questions that might replace each other in an exam that might be taken by the same dynamic rule. And the question title reflects the place of the question in the folder structure, to know what you have there. This is a very strict structure, and for every school it's the same. So if I see a question name, I know that it's anatomy, it's about the knee, it's about this or that. I also know which level of difficulty the question is, because it's in a certain folder of a certain name, and there are agreements about it; everyone uses it the same. I know nothing about anatomy, I haven't done anything with those things about how you're filled, something like that, only use the agreements, the rules being agreed about.

We have an agreement about metadata. We use learning outcomes, the learning outcomes are in folders where the questions are in, so all questions with the same learning outcome are in the same folder. We use units, those are the root folders in our subjects, and we use keyword tags for the difficulty of the question, and the questions are pooled in a test matrix by metadata, by tags, or by folder structure by most schools.

We have a fixed agreement about exams, every exam has a strict name and they are organised by subject group, the study, and from this exam for instance there will be a test matrix – that's a test form – and there will be 4, 5, 6 versions, it depends on how many times the test is taken. The numbers are the references to our student definition system.

We have an agreement about reports. This is a simple report but again you see the School of Health, and again you see the study Physiotherapy of the School of Health, and here you see the volume of tests they have taken. Now those were real tests, they are not pilots, they are real tests and we have this for all our schools because we have this strict structure of the system. Here we are very pleased with how we could structure the system. And you see we are pleased with that part of it, because we're not having a limit any more about 19,000 exam takings, we are now near 30,000 exam takings in the first year of our implementation. No innovation, and in September we had nothing so it's building up, you know? I think we will be soon, if everything goes well, about 40 or 50,000 exam takings a year; only summative, we do nothing formative in the system yet.

What would we like to do? We would like to do innovation next year, and it's about other exams, very important are the secure file attachment questions with Microsoft Excel for instance, where they have tests in or Microsoft Word. Very important are essay questions, and with the annotation possibilities of Surpass we want to explore them, things like that. And, we want to collaborate between centres because if they have all tests to write Dutch – and they have – they might use the same questions, and they don't at the moment. Making good questions is very expensive, so we want collaboration not only between centres, but we hope also between universities, and there are some people here who know that I want that, yeah?

Okay, that's what I wanted to tell you. I've no time for more. I've asked Andy for more, sorry he was very severe.

About the presenter

Leen van Kaam, Senior (Functional) System Administrator – Saxion

Leen has worked in K12 and Dutch Higher Education as a Consultant, Team Leader, Senior Functional System Administrator or Project Leader for over 24 years now. She has worked for the implementation and adoption of student administration systems in the 1990s in K12 education, and started with e-learning and assessment environments in 1998 as a consultant in K12 and Dutch Higher Education. Leen has a lot of experience in setting up functional system administration teams, based on the BISL framework. She has worked with almost all of the universities in the Netherlands and some abroad, making her an expert in applications like Blackboard, Moodle, Surpass, Content Managements systems, Question Mark Perception, Kaltura and the integration between those applications. At Saxion, Leen was responsible for the process of selecting new digital exam environments and the implementation of Surpass Academic Edition.

About Saxion University

The University has a rich history – its roots can be traced back to the 1875. A merger of two educational institutions, the Hogeschool Enschede and Hogeschool Ijselland, in 1998 paved the way for Saxion University in its present form. This merger enabled Saxion to build further on its strong position in Dutch higher education and since then the University has come to be recognised as an important centre of expertise at regional, national and international level.

Saxion attracts students from all corners of the globe: Afghanistan, Brazil, China, Egypt, Finland, Ghana, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Sudan, Taiwan, Uganda, Vietnam… the list represents an A-Z of 55 nationalities, contributing to a truly multi-cultural learning experience.

Saxion University was already an experienced user of e-Assessment but wanted to find a system that better met the current and future needs of a large, modern, multi-campus international university. So, it shortlisted three potential systems and carried out a rigorous selection process. At the end of the process Saxion University chose Surpass from BTL.

Following the selection of BTL, Leen van Kaam, Teamleider functioneel beheer Programma ICT&O stated:

"We have gone through a very detailed selection process. I'm delighted that we now have an assessment solution that meets the scale and complexity of our needs."

Statistics: Contract since 2012. University based in the Netherlands.

Website: http://www.saxion.edu/site/